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Verbakel, C.M.C.; de Graaf, P.M.

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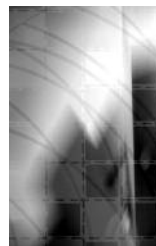
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Partner effects on labour market participation and job level: opposing mechanisms

■ **Ellen Verbakel**

Tilburg University

■ **Paul M. de Graaf**

Tilburg University

ABSTRACT

This study investigates to what extent a partner's career resources affect labour market participation and job level. Theories on this topic predict opposing partner effects: economic theory expects a negative relationship due to financial incentives, whereas a positive relationship can be expected from a social capital point of view. In order to test these opposing mechanisms properly, (a) labour market outcomes are decomposed into labour market participation and job level, and (b) a historical perspective is introduced. Large scale labour force surveys conducted by Statistics Netherlands from 1977 onwards show that a partner's career resources have a negative influence on working hours and a positive influence on job level. Over birth cohorts, the negative effect on working hours has become stronger for males and weaker for females, whereas the positive effect on job level has decreased for both men and women.

KEY WORDS

couples / labour market participation / labour market success / social inequality

Introduction

Do career resources of the partner help or hinder one's labour market career? The literature reports conflicting ideas on this subject: economic theory expects a negative relationship due to financial incentives, whereas a positive relationship can be expected from a social capital point of view. These

opposing expectations make it unclear, beforehand, what consequences the career resources of the partner have for labour market outcomes. The aim of this study is to better understand the interdependencies between partners' labour market careers, and to assess the value and importance of the conflicting mechanisms. In order to accomplish this aim, two ideas are crucial. Firstly, it is essential to decompose labour market outcomes into labour market participation and job level. Although both labour market outcomes might be positively and negatively affected by partner's career resources at the same time, negative partner effects are assumed to be particularly relevant to working hours and positive partner effects to job level. Secondly, a historical perspective is needed to understand the value of the conflicting mechanisms properly since the importance of the mechanisms may have changed over time due to societal processes such as economic and cultural modernization.

The relationship between career resources of the one partner and labour market outcomes of the other partner has become a more salient topic since the steep rise in female labour market participation. This development has produced the need for partners to harmonize their labour market careers in order to find a satisfactory balance between paid and unpaid work within the household (Maher et al., 2008). Acting out of the household's interest, labour market decisions are made taking both partners' resources into account (Blossfeld and Drobnič, 2001).

Several mechanisms may lie beyond partners' joint labour market decisions, and these mechanisms lead to opposite expectations about the direction of the relationship. Firstly, there is the economic argument that a partner who is successful on the labour market reduces the financial incentives of the other partner to work long hours or to strive for a high occupational status (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998). This mechanism would result in negative partner effects. A social capital mechanism would produce positive partner effects because a partner, especially one with high levels of career resources, might be able to help the other to get a better job (Lin et al., 1981). In addition, level of education might represent, apart from a labour market related resource, a non-traditional attitude towards the sexual division of labour. Therefore, highly educated husbands might stimulate their wives' careers, whereas highly educated wives might think it is important and desirable that their husbands spend time at child care and household work as well, which might hinder their husbands' labour market careers (Bernasco, 1994).

'The question whether partner effects are positive or negative is an important one because the consequences of positive partner effects for the level of inequality between couples are opposite to the consequences of negative partner effects' (Verbakel, 2008). On the basis of educational and occupational homogamy, a positive association between partners' labour market positions might be expected. As a result, resources are accumulated within households, which increases the inequality between households. A positive partner effect furthers the level of inequality between couples because it is the people who already have successful partners who get better labour market outcomes. In contrast, a negative partner effect would weaken

inequality between couples because the accumulation process is frustrated when one successful partner restricts the labour market outcomes of the other partner.

The opposing consequences for inequality between couples and for the labour market outcomes of the individual make the question of whether career resources of the partner have a positive or a negative influence on labour market outcomes a highly relevant one. Because several mechanisms could be at work at the same time, resulting in a zero correlation, this topic is not easy to study. This study incorporates two ways to deal with this problem. First of all, it distinguishes between types of labour market outcomes: labour market participation and job level. For reasons to be explained in the theory section, the economic mechanism, resulting in negative partner effects, is expected to be particularly relevant to working hours, whereas the social capital mechanism, resulting in positive partner effects, is expected to be mainly relevant to job level. These opposite effects imply that a study on incomes (which can be considered as a function of working hours and job level) would not reveal the underlying mechanisms, and that a distinction between labour market outcomes is necessary to understand the way career resources of one partner affect labour market outcomes of the other partner.

Secondly, this study incorporates a historical perspective, investigating cohorts born between 1940 and 1974. Based on general societal processes, such as individualization and cultural and economic modernization, hypotheses are derived about changes in the influence of the partner over time. For example, the expectation is that a restrictive partner effect on female careers was mainly relevant in earlier times when traditional values were generally upheld, whereas a supporting partner effect will be found in more recent times that can be characterized by a less traditional value climate. If this hypothesis is true, the neglect of a historical perspective, while studying individuals born in very different time frames, would only reveal the net association between spouses' labour market careers in which positive and negative effects cancel each other out to a certain extent. The inclusion of a historical perspective can make clear how the conflicting mechanisms work that lie behind the interdependencies between partners' labour market careers.

The above can be summarized in the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do the career resources of the partner positively or negatively affect labour market participation and job level?
- 2) To what extent has the influence of the career resources of the partner on labour market participation and job level changed over time?

The next section outlines the theoretical background of the conflicting mechanisms in more detail and sets out the arguments for the expectation that the importance of the mechanisms differs between different aspects of the labour market (i.e. between participation and job level) and the expectation that their importance has changed over time. This study assesses the relationships between partners' career resources and labour market outcomes for the Netherlands using the Labour Force Surveys (1977–2006).

Hypotheses on partner effects: economic, social, and cultural interpretations

The conflicting mechanisms about the way career resources of the partner affect labour market outcomes will be outlined below, being referred to as economic, social, and cultural interpretations of career resources. In this article, career resources are defined in terms of education and occupational status. Although it could be argued one could argue that occupational status refers more strongly to economic resources, whereas education refers more strongly to social and cultural resources, both education and occupational status can be considered as resources with comparable meanings that have effects in the same direction. In our view, occupational status comprises more than a proxy for current income. Like education, occupational status serves as a general signal for a person's socio-economic position, which can also be considered as a proxy for the quality of the social network, and for a person's potential and future occupational success. The cultural interpretation, however, mainly refers to education, since it is a well established finding that highly educated people hold less traditional values regarding working women and mothers and the sexual division of labour (Alwin et al., 1992), whereas usually no direct relationship with occupational status is assumed.

The first mechanism to be discussed is based on economic theory, and leads to the prediction that career resources of one partner negatively affect the labour market career of the other partner. New home economists reason that specialization of tasks, in which the spouse with the highest earning capacities does paid labour and the other unpaid labour, is the most optimal situation for a household (Becker, 1981). Consequently, the partner with the most career resources is a restriction to the labour market career of the other. The economic idea has also been translated into more general terms, which are central in this study: if one partner is successful on the labour market (indicated by high levels of career resources), the other has no financial incentive to work long hours or to put much effort into his or her career; and also, someone whose partner has a successful career can afford to have a less successful career (Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Hendrickx et al., 2001; Sørensen, 1983). This mechanism can be compared to the idea that labour market supply diminishes when a certain amount of income is reached, which in neo-classical economics is often referred to as the 'income effect' (Borjas, 2005). Support for a negative effect of partners' resources on labour market careers has been found in earlier studies (Bernasco et al., 1998; Henz and Sundström, 2001; Sundström and Duvander, 2002; Van der Lippe, 1993).

A refinement of the economic interpretation helps to better understand how labour market careers of spouses are interrelated. In general, the economic interpretation applies to all aspects of labour market careers, but it is likely to be especially relevant to the number of working hours and less so to job level. It seems reasonable to assume that there is a natural maximum of

working hours that couples can handle simply because of time limits (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004; Maher et al., 2008) (although this maximum can differ among couples with and without children), but there is no clear maximum job level couples can handle since high-level positions are generally very much welcomed. Two high-level jobs can of course be demanding too, but they bring in money that can be used to outsource time consuming household tasks or child-care. The assumption is that if couples reach or exceed the maximum they can reasonably deal with, they are inclined to take a step back (compare the logic behind ceiling effects, which increases the odds of a reduction), and in this decision both partners' labour market resources will be taken into account. Since the existence of a maximum is more likely for working hours than for job level, the restrictive partner effect is supposed to be more compelling towards working hours.

Secondly, the social interpretation assumes that career resources of the spouse act as a support mechanism for one's career. In this interpretation, career resources are regarded as an indicator of social resources. According to social capital theory, having a partner with social resources can be beneficial to one's labour market career because of useful social networks and effective information or advice on career development (Lin et al., 1981). The transfer of the positive effect of career resources on the labour market career of the partner has been found in several studies (Benham, 1974; Bernardi, 1999; Bernasco et al., 1998; Brynin and Francesconi, 2004; Brynin and Schupp, 2000; Henkens et al., 1993; Verbakel and de Graaf, 2008).

The social interpretation of the effect of a spouse's career resources can be refined in the sense that it is more relevant to job level than to labour market participation. A resourceful partner can transmit occupational skills, competences and experience, which might improve the partner's skills and thereby the quality of the output on the job. Moreover, experience in high-level jobs enables the partner to transmit cultural resources, such as knowledge about how to speak, dress, and behave in higher-level circles and which increases the odds of achieving a good position at that level. Finally, partners with many career resources have information about job openings and opportunities in the higher strata which they can share with their partners (Bernardi, 1999). It is true that social capital also helps in getting a job (Granovetter, 1995) but for those who are employed it is hard to think of sound reasons why social capital would affect the number of working hours. Some argue that social capital indirectly affects working hours by assuming a positive relationship between quality and working hours of the job. In many countries, part-time jobs are considered secondary jobs, with lower wages, and less labour market protection. If social capital helps in getting higher-level jobs, it indirectly results in full-time jobs. However, in the case of the Netherlands, part-time workers enjoy the same level of labour market protection, hourly wages and pension rights as full-time workers do, and this parity is enforced by law (van Oorschot, 2004). In sum, it is hypothesized that negative partner effects will be dominant in predicting husband's and wife's working hours, whereas positive partner effects will be dominant in predicting husband's and wife's job level.

The third interpretation of the effects of the spouse's career resources is a cultural one, and is based on the observation that education is an important predictor of attitudes towards gender roles and division of labour (Alwin et al., 1992). Traditionally, men have a breadwinner role and women a caring role, but modern values emphasize that husband and wife should divide paid and unpaid tasks equally. In practice, this equality implies that husbands are encouraged to invest more time in the home, and that women are stimulated to be active on the labour market and to build a career. Therefore, the hypothesis is that a highly educated husband will positively affect his wife's labour market career, whereas a highly educated wife will negatively affect her husband's labour market career. The cultural interpretation is supposedly valid for predicting both husband's and wife's working hours and job level since values refer to labour market participation (working hours) as well as to career pursuit (job level).

Hypotheses on changes in partner effects

This study investigates to what extent the effects spouses have on each others' careers have changed over time by comparing the labour market careers of couples born between 1940 and 1974. Three major societal changes underlie the expectations about changes in partner effects: (a) individualization and secularization, (b) cultural modernization, and (c) economic modernization.

Individualization and secularization point to a tendency for people to live their lives more independently of the influence of others, and of their social environment in general. From this general trend, it can be derived that the influence that partners have on each others' labour market careers will have diminished. If it is assumed that social policy shapes people's labour market decisions, developments in the way the social welfare system in the Netherlands has been constructed lead to a similar prediction. The Dutch social welfare system had, as in many other European countries, long been designed on the basis of a male breadwinner model but has shifted towards a system that is underpinned by the 'adult-worker model' (Lewis, 2001). The basic assumption of the adult-worker model is that all adults are active on the labour market and that society consists of self-sufficient, autonomous individuals. Although Lewis argues that this model does not correspond with social reality, it might have stimulated individuals (men and women) to emphasize their own interests instead of the household's interests when making labour market career decisions. Most likely, it is the economic mechanism that has lost prevalence, as the new welfare system especially harms people who reduce labour market activity.

The process of cultural modernization may have had different consequences for men and women. The cultural modernization has influenced the norms about the sexual division of labour towards more approval of working women and mothers and caring fathers (Treas and Widmer, 2000). For women, traditional

norms coincide with the restrictive partner effect: women should stop working and building a career after they marry or have children. The supportive partner effect is more in line with the modern value that women should have a career of their own. As a result, negative partner effects on female labour market careers are likely to have declined in favour of supportive partner effects over birth cohorts. For men, the trend is expected to be the other way around: traditional norms prescribe male responsibility for the household's income, which means that male careers were supported as much as possible by their wives, whereas modern values emphasize men's contribution to family life, which implies that their wives have more reason to restrict their husbands' labour market careers.

The process of economic modernization is expected to have led to a weakening of the negative partner effect and to an increase of the positive partner effect, for both men and women. The shift from ascription to achievement resulted in more openness in society (Blau and Duncan, 1967). In an open society, in which occupations are only marginally set by social origin, partners have more opportunities to stimulate upward mobility than in a closed society, and it is in the couple's interest to seize that opportunity. Consequently, it has increasingly become in spouses' interest to stimulate each others' labour market careers, resulting in a shift from negative to positive partner effects.

Data

The data is drawn from the Labour Force Surveys conducted by Statistics Netherlands in 1977, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006.¹ These surveys contain detailed information on job characteristics of both spouses, together with information on their levels of education, and presence of children. The data are representative of the Dutch non-institutionalized population of 15 years and older. Response rates are about 60 percent. Male-female couples between 25 and 54 years of age and born between 1940 and 1974 are selected under the condition that the number of working hours and job level (if employed) of both spouses is known. After this selection there is information on the labour market situation of 267,498 couples.

Dependent variables: labour market participation and job level

Male labour market participation has been divided into three categories: non-employment, part-time employment (less than 35 hours a week) and full-time employment (35 hours or more a week). Note that in the Netherlands non-working men in this age category consist mainly of disabled and unemployed men, and thus are involuntarily jobless. Since the variation in the group of part-time working women is larger and theoretically more interesting, female labour

market participation has been divided into four categories: non-employment, a small part-time job (1–19 hours a week), a large part-time job (20–34 hours a week) and a full-time job (35 hours or more a week). The reduction of the number of working hours into a limited number of categories could be considered a loss of information. However, the distinction between part-time and full-time jobs is an important threshold in the Netherlands, and is therefore more meaningful than the precise number of working hours.

Job level has been measured in terms of occupational status, making use of the International Socioeconomic Index (ISEI) (Ganzeboom et al., 1992). The terms job level and occupational status will be used interchangeably.

Independent variables

The educational attainment of respondents and their spouses has been recoded in terms of years of education so as to have an interval variable: primary education (6 years), lower vocational training and lower secondary training (10 years), intermediate vocational training/intermediate and higher secondary training (12 years), vocational colleges (15 years), and university (17 years).

Partner's and respondent's working hours have been top-coded at 40 hours a week and job level has been measured in ISEI. Partners who do not have a job get a zero score on working hours and a mean score on job level. A dummy variable indicating that the partner is non-employed is included in the analysis. This dummy variable demonstrates the difference between men or women with a non-employed partner and those with a partner with an average job level.

The models contain several control variables. Firstly, the unemployment rate for each survey year (information comes from Statistics Netherlands) serves as a control for demand side factors. Secondly, a distinction has been made between couples with and without children. The former consists of a category in which the youngest child is under four years of age and a category in which the youngest child is four years or older.² Childless couples could be either in the pre-child phase or in the empty nest phase. The data do not provide detailed information on children who do not live in the same household as their parents but it seems plausible that couples in which the wife is younger than 40 years are in the pre-child phase, and couples where the wife is 40 years or older are in the empty nest phase (de Graaf and Vermeulen, 1997). As a result, family-cycle consists of four categories. Thirdly, the models include birth cohort. Birth cohorts are also used to analyse changes over time. The couples in this study are born between 1940 and 1974 and in the age range of 25 to 54 years. The repeated cross-sectional surveys (1977 through 2006) allow for observing all birth cohorts at different ages, which makes it possible to disentangle them and to estimate the effects of age and birth cohort. Spouses' average birth year has been transformed in such a way that 0 reflects birth year 1940, and divided by factor 10 in order to interpret the effects of cohort as changes over decades. The models control for age of the respondent by including age and age square. Furthermore, couples' marital status is controlled for, distinguishing married

from cohabiting couples. It can be argued that married partners have a stronger commitment to their relationship and therefore experience stronger partner effects as compared to cohabiting partners, who have a weaker commitment and decide more independently of one another. Because cohabitation is more common in younger cohorts than in older cohorts, this distinction must be controlled for when correctly assessing the trend effects.

Age has been centred at 35 years, and (partner's) education, (partner's) job level, and (partner's) working hours have been mean-centred. Table 1 overleaf shows descriptive information on all non-centred variables used in the analysis. The information on males is also the partner information for females, and vice versa.

Results

Labour market participation

Tables 2 and 3 show, for husbands and wives respectively, to what extent their labour market participation depends on their resources and those of their spouse, controlled for the unemployment rate, birth year, age, marital status, and the presence and age of children (Model 1). In addition, Model 2 includes the interaction terms with birth year, which show to what extent these effects have changed over time. This section first discusses the contrast between employment and non-employment. Subsequently, it deals with the contrast between part-time and full-time work.

The likelihood of being employed versus non-employed hardly depends on the career resources of the partner. Only for men, the likelihood of having a job increases as their wives have higher educational levels ($b=0.086$). Female employment does not depend on the resources of the spouse. In line with earlier studies (Ultee et al., 1988; Verbakel et al., 2008), the results demonstrate that (non)employment comes in couples: the odds for a man with a non-working wife of being employed rather than non-employed is only about 20 percent of the odds for a man with a working wife ($\exp^{-1.158}$); for women this percentage is almost 30 percent ($\exp^{-1.250}$). It is probable that non-employed partners lack resources (other than indicated by educational and occupational attainment) that help in finding a job.

If the focus is on employed respondents only (which concern 93.8% of the men and 63.5% of the women in our sample), Tables 2 and 3 show clear support for the existence of negative partner effects both on male and female labour market participation. As education and occupational status of the wife increase, the likelihood of having a full-time job instead of a part-time job for a man decreases. Women are found to be less likely to have large instead of small part-time jobs, and to have full-time jobs instead of part-time jobs (either small or large) if their husbands are highly educated and have a high job level. The effects are considerable; for example, the odds of having a full-time job instead of a 20–34 hours job is 35 percent lower for women with a poorly educated husband than for women with a highly educated husband ($\exp^{(-0.040 \cdot 11)}$).

Table 1 Descriptive information on dependent and independent variables for men and women (non-centred)

	men					women				
	N	min	max	mean	st dev	N	min	max	mean	st dev
labour market participation	272,570					272,570				
non-employed	6.2%									
part-time job (1–34 hours)	7.3%									
full-time job (>= 35 hours)	86.5%									
non-employed						36.5%				
small part-time job (1–19 hours)						21.9%				
large part-time (20–34 hours)						27.6%				
full-time job (>= 35 hours)						14.0%				
job level										
occupational status ^a	255,633	24 (6.73)	86 (10.33)	47.76 (8.00)	14.76 (0.80)	173,091	24 (7.24)	86 (13.25)	45.82 (9.54)	13.74 (1.43)
partner's resources										
partner's education (in years)	272,570	6	17	11.51	2.73	272,570	6	17	11.98	2.88
partner no job	36.5%					6.2%				
partner's occupational status ^b	173,091	24	86	45.82	13.74	255,633	24	86	47.76	14.76
partner's working hours ^b	173,091	1	40	23.55	10.74	255,633	1	40	38.17	4.11
individual resources										
education (in years)	272,570	6	17	11.98	2.88	272,570	6	17	11.51	2.73
working hours ^a	255,633	1	40	38.17	4.11	173,091	1	40	23.55	10.74
control variables										
unemployment rate	272,570	2.00	7.50	4.49	1.66		2.00	7.50	4.49	1.66
marital status: married (v. cohabiting)	88.2%					88.2%				
no children, wife < 40	13.8%					13.8%				
youngest child < 4	28.4%					28.4%				
youngest child >= 4	48.3%					48.3%				
no children, wife >= 40	9.5%					9.5%				
age	272,570	25	54	40.18	7.58	272,570	25	54	37.93	7.57
age square	272,570	625	2,916	1,672	616	272,570	625	2,916	1,496	588
average birth year	272,570	1940	1974	1958	8.50	272,570	1940	1974	1958	8.50

^a for employed respondents only
^b for respondents with employed partner only
Source: Labour Force Surveys 1977–2006

Interestingly, full-time jobs are not always held by the most highly educated. Highly educated men and women are less likely to have a full-time job than a (large) part-time job. For men, this finding could be interpreted as an indication of modern values that are more strongly embraced by the highly educated. For women, this finding is surprising. Here, modern values do not seem to play a decisive role. Job level appears to be a constant factor in stimulating labour market participation of both men and women; whatever contrast is chosen, job level increases labour market participation. In neo-classical economic terms, this finding can be interpreted as a dominance of substitution effects over income effects: substitution effects imply that a high wage (which is positively correlated with job level) stimulates work hours since it is too costly not to work those hours, whereas income effects imply that a high wage reduces working hours because this can be afforded (Borjas, 2005). The control variables have effects in the expected direction. For instance, children strongly restrict labour market participation of women, and in times of low labour demand (indicated by high levels of unemployment) the odds of being employed are lower.

Models 2 in Tables 2 and 3 present trends in partner effects on labour market participation. Developments appear to be opposite for men and women. For men, the negative influence of wives' educational and occupational attainment on the probability of working full-time instead of part-time has become more negative over cohorts (e.g. the strength of the effect of wives' education increased from $-.021$ for the 1940-cohort to $-0.021 - (0.025 \times 3.4) = -0.106$ for the 1974-cohort). Whereas for men negative partner effects on labour market participation have become stronger, the opposite is true for women: the negative effect of husbands' educational level on female labour market participation has weakened over cohorts, and the negative effect of husbands' job levels in the older cohorts has disappeared in the recent cohort. As a result, in young cohorts, the decision for women to work full-time instead of part-time is much less, or even no longer, dependent on the resources of the husband. The opposing trends for men and women are in line with our hypothesis based on cultural modernization. The overall conclusion is that the partner's career resources reduce working hours of employed men and women, and this negative partner effect has increased for men and decreased for women.

Job level

Partner effects on job level are presented in Table 4 for men and women who have a job.³ In contrast with the predominantly negative partner effects on labour market participation, the results show clear positive effects of partner's career resources on job level: people with a highly educated or high-status partner have higher job levels. For each extra year of the wife's education, the job level of the husband increases with about half a point on the ISEI scaling, resulting in a maximum impact of the wife's education of 6 ISEI points (11×0.542). The effects are somewhat smaller for women, but still highly significant.

Table 2 Labour market participation of men: effects of individual and partner's career resources (binomial logistic regression, effects on log odds)

men	employed v. non-employed				full-time v. part-time			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
intercept	4.770**	0.064	3.992**	0.076	2.532**	0.059	2.581**	0.065
unemployment rate	-0.080**	0.005	-0.070**	0.005	0.036**	0.005	0.035**	0.005
birth year ^a	-0.355**	0.014	0.008	0.027	0.029*	0.014	0.049*	0.020
age	-0.037**	0.002	-0.034**	0.002	-0.039**	0.002	-0.042**	0.002
age square	-0.002**	0.000	-0.002**	0.000	0.001**	0.000	0.001**	0.000
married (v. cohabiting)	0.340**	0.027	0.366**	0.027	0.438**	0.023	0.425**	0.023
no children, wife < 40 (ref)								
youngest child < 4	-0.083*	0.033	-0.021	0.035	-0.582**	0.029	-0.629**	0.031
youngest child >= 4	-0.067	0.035	0.003	0.036	-0.308**	0.033	-0.353**	0.034
no children, wife >= 40	-0.316**	0.041	-0.237**	0.042	-0.428**	0.039	-0.476**	0.040
education	0.167**	0.003	0.182**	0.007	-0.066**	0.004	-0.105**	0.009
* birth year ^a			-0.009*	0.004			0.023**	0.005
occupational status	n.a.		n.a.		0.011**	0.001	-0.001	0.002
* birth year ^a			n.a.				0.006**	0.001
wife's education	0.086**	0.004	0.043**	0.008	-0.064**	0.004	-0.021*	0.009
* birth year ^a			0.026**	0.004			-0.025**	0.005
wife's occupational status	0.000	0.001	-0.001	0.002	-0.013**	0.001	-0.007**	0.002
* birth year ^a			0.000	0.001			-0.003**	0.001
wife's working hours	-0.039**	0.001	-0.023**	0.003	-0.017**	0.001	-0.009**	0.002
* birth year ^a			-0.010**	0.001			-0.005**	0.001
wife no job	-1.518**	0.037	-0.520**	0.081	-0.110**	0.029	-0.014	0.068
* birth year ^a			-0.612**	0.046			-0.053	0.036

** p < .01; * p < .05; n.a. not applicable
^a birth year ranges from 0 (1940) to 3.4 (1974)
Source: Labour Force Surveys 1977–2006, N = 272,570

Respondent's education and working hours contribute positively to job level as well, and are more important than resources of the partner. Note that the causality between job level and number of working hours is difficult to assess: on the one hand, a high job level is an incentive to work many hours; on the other hand, especially for women, working many hours may be rewarded by employers, who interpret this as work commitment. However, in order to prevent other effects from getting confounded, working hours are included in the models.

Developments in partner effects on job level are presented in Models 2 in Table 4. In general, the positive influence of spouse's career resources on job level declines over birth cohorts, although it remains significantly positive in the youngest cohort. The effect of wife's education on the husband's job level

Table 3 Labour market participation of women: effects of individual and partner's career resources (binomial and multinomial logistic regression, effects on log odds)

women	employed v. non-employed						large part-time v. small part-time						full-time v. small part-time						full-time v. large part-time					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se	
intercept	1.157**	0.034		1.039**	0.035		2.266**	0.052		2.145**	0.053		2.949**	0.061		2.783**	0.063		0.683**	0.049		0.638**	0.050	
unemployment rate	-0.017**	0.003		-0.015**	0.003		-0.004	0.004		0.000	0.004		0.012*	0.005		0.020**	0.005		0.016**	0.005		0.020**	0.005	
birth year ^a	0.688**	0.007		0.746**	0.009		0.094**	0.012		0.154**	0.013		-0.112**	0.015		-0.051**	0.016		-0.206**	0.013		-0.205**	0.014	
age	0.075**	0.001		0.074**	0.001		0.023**	0.002		0.024**	0.002		-0.027**	0.002		-0.026**	0.002		-0.051**	0.002		-0.050**	0.002	
age square	-0.002**	0.000		-0.002**	0.000		0.000**	0.000		0.000**	0.000		0.001**	0.000		0.001**	0.000		0.001**	0.000		0.001**	0.000	
married (v. cohabiting)	-0.350**	0.018		-0.353**	0.018		-0.631**	0.022		-0.633**	0.022		-1.013**	0.025		-1.010**	0.025		-0.382**	0.018		-0.378**	0.018	
no children, wife < 40 (ref)																								
youngest child < 4	-1.796**	0.019		-1.796**	0.019		-1.768**	0.028		-1.787**	0.028		-3.469**	0.032		-3.492**	0.032		-1.701**	0.022		-1.704**	0.022	
youngest child > 4	-1.434**	0.022		-1.416**	0.022		-1.794**	0.031		-1.800**	0.031		-2.934**	0.034		-2.929**	0.035		-1.140**	0.025		-1.130**	0.025	
no children, wife >= 40	-1.175**	0.027		-1.170**	0.027		-1.251**	0.038		-1.260**	0.038		-1.671**	0.044		-1.675**	0.044		-0.420**	0.034		-0.415**	0.034	
education	0.181**	0.002		0.144**	0.004		0.039**	0.003		0.003	0.007		0.027**	0.004		-0.035**	0.009		-0.012**	0.004		-0.038**	0.009	
* birth year ^a				0.023**	0.002					0.022**	0.004					0.037**	0.005		0.015**	0.004		0.015**	0.004	
occupational status	n.a.			n.a.			0.040**	0.001		0.038**	0.001		0.064**	0.001		0.064**	0.002		0.025**	0.001		0.026**	0.002	
* birth year ^a				n.a.						0.001	0.001					0.000	0.001		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.001	
husband's education	-0.002	0.002		-0.001	0.005		-0.021**	0.003		-0.015*	0.007		-0.061**	0.004		-0.085**	0.009		-0.040**	0.003		-0.070**	0.008	
* birth year ^a				-0.001	0.003					-0.003	0.004					0.014**	0.005		0.014**	0.005		0.017**	0.004	
husband's	0.001	0.000		0.001	0.001		-0.001**	0.001		-0.002	0.001		-0.005**	0.001		-0.013**	0.002		-0.003**	0.001		-0.011**	0.002	
occupational status																								
* birth year ^a				0.000	0.000					0.000	0.001					0.004**	0.001		0.004**	0.001		0.004**	0.001	
husband's working	-0.017**	0.001		-0.004	0.003		-0.022**	0.001		0.012**	0.004		-0.021**	0.002		0.014**	0.005		0.001	0.002		0.002	0.004	
hours																								
* birth year ^a				-0.009**	0.001					-0.020**	0.002					-0.021**	0.002					-0.001	0.002	
husband no job	-1.250**	0.048		-0.247*	0.104		-0.361**	0.065		0.380**	0.155		0.426**	0.080		0.948**	0.190		0.787**	0.066		0.568**	0.165	
* birth year ^a				-0.640**	0.061					-0.416**	0.086					-0.299**	0.103					0.117	0.083	

** p < .01; * p < .05; n.a. not applicable

^a birth year ranges from 0 (1940) to 3.4 (1974)

Source: Labour Force Surveys 1977–2006, N = 272,570

Table 4 Occupational status of men and women: effects of individual and partner's career resources (OLS regression, unstandardized regression coefficients)

	men				women			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
intercept	55.327**	0.160	55.452**	0.181	49.256**	0.192	48.707**	0.198
unemployment rate	-0.272**	0.014	-0.265**	0.014	-0.323**	0.017	-0.304**	0.017
birth year ^a	-2.901**	0.036	-3.075**	0.054	-1.007**	0.050	-0.874**	0.054
age	0.030**	0.006	0.030**	0.006	0.042**	0.007	0.052**	0.007
age square	-0.005**	0.000	-0.005**	0.000	-0.007**	0.000	-0.007**	0.000
married (v. cohabiting)	-0.130	0.076	-0.113	0.077	0.108	0.078	0.144	0.078
no children, wife < 40 (ref)								
youngest child < 4	-0.073	0.083	0.042	0.086	1.709**	0.090	1.716**	0.093
youngest child > = 4	-0.524**	0.090	-0.398**	0.092	-0.184	0.104	-0.087	0.106
no children, wife > = 40	-0.778**	0.117	-0.650**	0.120	0.230	0.136	0.293*	0.138
education	3.010**	0.009	2.691**	0.020	2.458**	0.012	1.905**	0.029
* birth year ^a			0.188**	0.011			0.301**	0.014
working hours	0.086**	0.005	-0.004	0.012	0.281**	0.003	0.285**	0.006
* birth year ^a			0.052**	0.006			-0.002	0.003
partner's education	0.542**	0.011	0.565**	0.024	0.374**	0.013	0.525**	0.031
* birth year ^a			-0.012	0.012			-0.081**	0.015
partner's occupational status	0.136**	0.002	0.151**	0.006	0.132**	0.002	0.170**	0.006
* birth year ^a			-0.009**	0.003			-0.020**	0.003
partner's working hours	-0.019**	0.003	-0.044**	0.007	-0.057**	0.006	-0.048**	0.015
* birth year ^a			0.014**	0.003			-0.005	0.008
partner no job	-1.025**	0.082	-2.063**	0.196	-3.616**	0.261	-2.872**	0.639
* birth year ^a			0.579**	0.099			-0.405	0.328
R ²	0.45		0.45		0.43		0.43	
N	255,633		255,633		173,091		173,091	

** p < .01; * p < .05

^a birth year ranges from 0 (1940) to 3.4 (1974)

Source: Labour Force Surveys 1977–2006

has remained unchanged. This result is in line with the idea that partners have become less influential in each others' labour market decisions and clearly contradicts the hypothesis based on economic modernization. The combination of the results with respect to trends on labour market participation and job level leads to the conclusion that for women both the negative partner effect on labour market participation and the positive partner effect on job level have decreased, whereas for men the negative partner effect on labour market participation has become stronger and the positive partner effect on job level has weakened.

Conclusion

This study investigated how and to what extent career resources of the spouse affect the labour market position of the other spouse. It proposed arguments why partner effects could be positive and negative, and two ways to test how partners influence each others' labour market careers have been applied: (1) a distinction between two labour market outcomes: labour market participation and job level, (2) the inclusion of a historical perspective.

The results showed that a partner's career resources, expressed in educational attainment and job level, negatively affect working hours, but positively affect job level. The negative effect of spouses' career resources on labour market participation can be interpreted as an economic mechanism: people have less incentive to work more hours if their spouses have many career resources. The positive effect on job level can be understood by a social capital interpretation: male and female labour market careers benefit from the resources of the spouse. The results also allow a cultural interpretation: highly educated women restrict working hours of their husbands, whereas highly educated men stimulate their wives' careers out of normative reasons. The opposing results for the different labour market outcomes demonstrate the usefulness of the strategy to decompose the effects of partner's career resources on labour market participation and job level. The implication is that studies that focus on the net effect of the career resources of the partner, for example on income, should reckon with the fact that positive and negative effects are going on at the same time, and offset each other to some extent.

Furthermore, the results of the trend analysis revealed that: (a) the negative effect of a partner's career resources on working hours has become stronger for men and weaker for women, (b) that the stimulating impact of a partner's career resources on job level has decreased for men as well as for women.

The former (more restriction to male careers and less restriction to female careers over time) coincides with the hypothesis based on cultural modernization, whereas the latter (declining partner influences) is more in line with the trend hypothesis based on the process of individualization. The main effects appeared to be strong enough to be observed without inclusion of a historical perspective. In that sense, the historical perspective was not necessary to assess whether the influence of the partner is positive or negative. Nevertheless, the results are interesting from a substantive point of view. They might contribute to the discussion on caring fathers, by indicating that highly educated wives with successful careers increasingly encourage their husbands to work part-time. Furthermore, the conclusion that female labour market decisions have become less and less dependent on the career resources of the husband might be interpreted in the light of female emancipation.

In the Introduction, the relevance of investigating positive and negative partner effects for their opposing consequences for inequality between couples was stressed: positive partner effects enhance inequality between couples, whereas negative partner effects reduce inequality. The results give no decisive

answer to the question which consequences are most likely since the results show effects in both directions. The net effect is therefore difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the results support the conclusion that the interdependencies between partners' labour market careers at least have some hampering effect on inequality due to the negative partner effects on working hours.

An important consequence of the fact that this study focuses on a single country, namely the Netherlands, is that the impact of employment institutions and policy regulations cannot be assessed. However, such country-level characteristics might serve as conditions for the way partners influence each others' careers. For instance, the specific employment institutions in the Netherlands might foster negative partner effects on working hours. A typical feature of the Dutch labour market is the wide availability and the high quality of part-time jobs, and the Netherlands is often referred to as the 'part-time working country' (Blossfeld and Hakim, 1997; Portegijs and Keuzenkamp, 2008). If part-time jobs have similar features to full-time jobs (in terms of hourly wage, quality of the job, protection, future career opportunities, etc) part-time work is attractive, especially to parents. In the Netherlands, where there is a relatively strong aversion to bringing one's children to a day-care centre for five days a week (Portegijs et al., 2006), it is likely that (at least) one of the spouses chooses a part-time job as soon as the household can afford the foregone income. In contrast, if part-time jobs are undesirable, people would generally strive for full-time jobs. In addition, if part-time jobs are scarce, the typical choice for people would be between non-employment and full-time employment. In such scenarios, the costs of not working full-time are very high, and people supposedly try to avoid such a situation. It is likely that it is the people whose partners have many resources who are most likely to succeed in avoiding this undesirable employment status, resulting in positive partner effects.

Social policy regulations are likely to affect the way spouses' careers are interrelated as well. One could argue that in welfare state regimes the negative partner effects are stronger than in liberal regimes because the social protection regulations reduce the future risks of giving up one's career. As a result, people are more willing to reduce working hours or job level if the current situation of the couple allows for such a decision. In addition, household supporting policies – as opposed to individual supporting policies – might also strengthen the negative partner effect. Such policies produce incentives, for instance in the form of tax incentives, that stimulate couples to decide to reduce the working hours of one of the partners, most often of the partner with the fewest career resources. In contrast, individual-based policies such as the adult-worker model (Lewis, 2001), stimulate individuals to let their own interests prevail over their household's interests. Comparative research to find out whether country characteristics such as the way employment institutions or policy regulations impact the way partners influence each others' careers is very welcome to further increase understanding about the interrelatedness of spouses' labour market careers.

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Notes

- 1 The large gap between the first (1977) and second (1991) survey has no consequences for the conclusions: an analysis in which the 1977 survey was not included did not lead to different conclusions.
- 2 The information in the 1977 survey was less precise, which forced us to classify four-year-old children in the 'youngest child under four-category' instead of in the 'youngest child four years or older-category'.
- 3 The fact that only men and women with a job are included implies that the analyses are run on a subset of the sample that might be selective: it is likely that people who do not have a job are the ones who would have poor job levels should they be in employment. This selection bias seems not to be a real threat to our conclusions since the selection is likely to lead to an underestimation of the partner effects. Partner's resources appear to positively affect job level, but this regression line is flattened because low job levels are underrepresented as a result of the selection: people with potential low job levels are non-employed (Smits, 1999). This type of bias can usually be solved by a Heckman two-step procedure. However, a necessary requirement for this procedure is an identifying variable that affects the selection probability (i.e. the odds of being employed versus non-employed), while not affecting job level. Such a variable is not readily available. The presence of children seems most appropriate but appears to be not identifying since it has an independent influence on job level as well. Nevertheless, Heckman models have been estimated with the presence and age of children in the selection equation and not in the substantive equation. Results show that partner effects hardly differ from the ones presented in Table 4 (results can be obtained from the authors).

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Ellen Verbakel

Ellen Verbakel is Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology at Tilburg University, The Netherlands. Her research interests include labour market careers of couples and comparative research on values.

Address: Department of Sociology, Tilburg University, P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands.

E-mail: E.Verbakel@uvt.nl

Paul M. de Graaf

Paul M. de Graaf is Professor at the Department of Sociology at Tilburg University, The Netherlands. His research interests include the sociology of education, social stratification, demographic and social aspects of the life-course, and the development of values patterns in Europe.

Address: Department of Sociology, Tilburg University, P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands.

Email: Pdegraaf@uvt.nl

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